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S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D

At the EVENING-LECTURE

In the OLD JEWRY

On SUNDAY, November 18, 1753,

On OCCASION

Of the DEATH of the late

Reverend JAMES FOSTER, D.D.

Who departed this LIFE, November 5, 1753,

In the 56th Year of his AGE.

By CHARLES BULKLEY.

L O N D O N :

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JOHN v. 35.

He was a burning and a shining light, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.

IT has been the universal custom of mankind, upon the decease of those, who have been called to fill up any of the more considerable or important stations of life, to pay some public tribute of respect and honor to those amiable and useful qualities, with which they adorned it. And, tho' the modes and fashions of particular ages and particular countries can scarce be looked upon with too suspicious an eye, as being generally corrupt and ensnaring ; yet ancient, universal custom has for the most part its origin from truth and nature. In this particular instance at least it is apparently founded upon the principles of reason, virtue, and religion. By commemorating the worthy, honorable and beneficial deeds of those, who have finished their part, and finally quitted the scene of action here upon earth, we take the most natural method of exciting a generous emulation in the breasts of others, to whom some of the most interesting scenes

of the part, that providence has allotted for them, may yet remain to be performed. We set before them an additional motive to exert themselves in it with unwearied ardor and resolution, by letting them see, that their virtue will not fail of meeting with an honorable remembrance here, whilst they themselves, if it shall have been prevalent and persevering, are enjoying its fuller and more abundant rewards in a higher and nobler state of being. By this means likewise our thoughts are directed to the farther improvement, that may be made of the faithful services of those, whose worth and usefulness we commemorate. And these are all of them effects, that may be most naturally hoped for, when our minds are under the first tender impressions of their removal from amongst us. And whilst we are thus endeavoring to do justice to their memories in a way, that may be most beneficial to mankind, and most friendly to the interests of society, we are in effect performing an act of devotion and pious homage. For by celebrating their praises and recounting those benefits, which they have been the instruments of communicating to the world, we do of course celebrate the praises and recount the favors of that infinitely bountiful and munificent father of spirits, who is the original fountain of good, the sovereign inspirer of all virtue, and of whatever is lovely

lovely and excelling, ornamental or desirable in the mind of man. By these considerations you will, I hope, be induced to give both a candid and serious attention to such particulars relating to our lately deceased friend, as appeared to me most conducive to the purposes they express.

The words of the text were at first spoken of that illustrious forerunner of our blessed Savior, John the Baptist. But I hope I may be indulged in the liberty of applying them to the present occasion, without being thought to suggest any supposed equality between our friend, whose death we now lament, and that most eminent preacher of righteousness, of whom our Savior himself has so expressly asserted that "a greater had not been born of woman." And this the rather, as it must be confessed there is a general similarity in the public duties and ministrations, in which they were respectively engaged. And indeed what is the very end of exhibiting the bright and shining characters of others to our view, but that each one may be excited to a noble ambition of making them, as much as possible, his own? What I propose in farther discoursing upon them on this occasion is in the

First place, to consider, with what propriety and how justly it may be said of our lately deceased friend, that "he was a burning and a shining light."

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Secondly, what is the remaining duty incumbent upon those, who have "for a season rejoiced in his light;" and then,

Thirdly, conclude with some suitable application.

First, I am to consider with what propriety and how justly it may be said of our lately deceased friend, that "he was a burning and a shining light."

And here we shall most naturally begin with observing, that he very happily laid the foundation of an upright and useful ministry at his first entrance upon the public services of his life. This was at a time, that did indeed afford him the most favorable opportunity for making proof of his own sincerity, and for his deliberately determining, by what principles he should govern his conduct in the subsequent labors of his ministerial office. It was at a time, when there was a strong and general debate carried on amongst the Dissenters concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, Subscriptions to such Tests of orthodoxy, as many of the contenders on one side of the question would have gladly imposed, and other points of difference between them. And it is well known, what a spirit of heat and violence, of bigotry and unhal-
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lowed zeal broke out upon this occasion among those of the popular party in the West of England; and particularly at Exeter, the place of his nativity, and, at that time, of his residence. His judgment determined in favor of the obnoxious opinions. And his integrity prompted him freely to declare that judgment, and publicly to appear in the defence of it. This he did, when he had the sufferings and ill-treatment of others on account of their professing the same opinions immediately before his eyes and directly in his view. Nor was it possible for him to foresee, how far the irritated and embittered spirit of ignorance, pride and party-zeal might proceed, or what might be the consequence of it with respect to himself. The history of the church is almost one continued proof of the dreadful progress it is apt to make, when once its malignant influences have begun to agitate and inflame the passions. And not many years before a melancholy and well-known instance of it had appeared in a neighbouring part of the British dominions, and in that opprobrious scene of persecution that was carried on at Dublin, on the same general account, against that truly worthy and venerable man, that sincere and uncorrupted Christian, Mr. Thomas Emlyn. But however uncertain might be the consequence, it is plain he was determined to run the hazard of it. And
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from whence could the determination proceed, but from a generous love of truth and a principle of integrity deeply possessing his heart? That it was not the effect merely of a heated and impetuous spirit, is undeniably plain. For when those, who interested themselves in his welfare, advised him to retire from the County of Devon, where the noise and clamor of bigotry seemed to threaten still more mischievous effects, he betook himself to an obscure retreat under the hills of Mendip in Somersetshire. And there he lived for some years in a state of honorable poverty. For such in the highest degree it ought to be esteemed, as being the sole effect of his integrity. Since with such a lively genius, and such popular talents, as he discovered from his earliest youth, he would scarce have failed to meet with immediate success, could he in any measure have reconciled himself to the arts of dissimulation and hypocrisy. But these he scorned; and thought it infinitely preferable to submit to such inconveniencies as he could not avoid, but by the forfeiture of his sincerity. These, as I have been well assured, he sustained with a calm and intrepid firmness of spirit, and with a humble and pious trust in the providence of God. From hence he removed to Trowbridge in Wiltshire, and preached for some time to a small congregation there, still laboring under the same
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general inconvenience of an extremely bare and scanty provision for the accommodations and uses of life. But so far was he from suffering any thing of this kind to relax the strength and vigor of his integrity, that during the time of his retreat in Somersetshire, if I am not mistaken, or else, whilst he resided at the last-mentioned place, being convinced that there was in the New Testament no foundation for the baptism of infants; but that the adult only were the proper subjects of that ordinance, he declared against the one and in favor of the other; and thus reduced his expectations of worldly success into a still narrower compass. Nor do I find that amidst these pressing difficulties and contracted prospects, he entertained the least thought of deserting the Dissenting interest; which he looked upon to be founded upon the same principles with the reformation itself; or that in any part of his life he was at all disposed to abandon it from that false respect and reverence for an established religion, which, where ever it prevails, is the certain enemy both of truth and liberty. And as he gave such clear and unexceptionable, such strong and convincing proofs of sincerity at his entrance upon public life, it would be the height of dissimulation not to suppose, that it continued to be the directing and animating principle in his future ministrations. It is true, that thro' the good

providence of God he in a great measure escaped those farther inconveniences and troubles, that might have been apprehended from his frank and open behaviour. And the very high degree of reputation, which he afterwards acquired, and the agreeable consequences of it with respect to the condition and circumstances of his life, may justly be looked upon as the reward of his integrity in the first scene of its tryal. A reward, which is not indeed allotted by the wise and gracious governor of the universe for all, who in the same situation may have approved themselves equally sincere, but which is however abundantly and richly compensated by those inward consolations and joys, that have in innumerable instances so well supported the upright and honest mind under the want of it. But surely there would be the utmost impropriety in supposing, that the reward of virtue must needs debase its honor and diminish its worth. On the contrary its natural tendency is to animate and confirm it. We may therefore reasonably presume, that as our friend had amidst so many discouraging circumstances adhered with inviolable integrity to the principles, that to him seemed to be founded upon truth and reason, it was with a sincere and generous pleasure that he embraced the fairer opportunity, which providence put into his hands by his settlement in this city, and the

the great acceptance he met with here, of recommending and enforcing them.

And as I am now addressing myself to many who have expressed the highest satisfaction in attending upon his ministry, or in the language of the text, "have rejoiced in his light," I apprehend it may upon this occasion be a very useful employment to take a brief review of the principal excellencies, that distinguished and characterised his ministerial services. And the first that I shall mention is this,

That in all matters of religious speculation he justly asserted the honor, and vindicated the use of human reason. When we consider that reason is one of the most eminent and important privileges of man, that faculty, by which alone we are capable of knowing God our maker, of discerning his perfections, and of attending to the glorious views of his government in the universe, and that it is therefore a necessary foundation for religion and for all its sublime and most exalted pleasures, we might be apt to imagine that none possessed of such an inestimable privilege should ever entertain the least thought of undervaluing or decrying it, and that there could be little or no occasion for putting in an express or formal claim in its behalf. And yet from undeniable fact it appears, not only that the true and just exercise of it is in general sadly neglected, but

likewise that there are numbers amongst us who do even upon principle reject the use of it, supposing reason and their religion, as christians, to be at irreconcilable variance with each other. And therefore, that they may become sound and established believers, they take pains to suppress the dictates of their understanding, and are fond of treating all pretences to a rational religion with contempt and disdain. Whether this most unnatural opposition between reason and the gospel was at first set on foot by ignorance, or by corrupt and wicked policy, it would perhaps be difficult to determine. There is too much reason to fear that it is now carried on and supported by both. But giving, as we ought, the fullest scope to the sentiments of candor and moderation upon this head, it is still certain and apparent, that, as there are multitudes, who stand ready to resign their understandings to the first invader, there are not wanting others, with whom it is a main and principal point to sink and debase human reason, that rich and glorious gift of God, to discourage and even to terrifie men from the exercise of it; and who are never better pleased than when they have gained a thorough conquest over it. Not so our late valuable friend. He justly looked upon reason as the ornament and glory of human nature, and upon religion as its proper province, in which alone

alone it can exert itself in a manner equal to its dignity, or answerable to the important ends for which it was bestowed. Nor could he forbear concluding, upon the most impartial reflection, that nothing can be more absurd in itself, or more repugnant to the honor of the gospel, than to suppose that in order to be christians we must cease to be men. And indeed if christianity be designed to be the religion of men, it must necessarily be thought to be in all its parts a religion agreeable and consonant to reason, and to be tried and judged of by it, Unless in short we suppose one miracle attending the first publication of the gospel, to have been the utter blasting and destruction of human reason, and the reducing the race of mankind by a new creation of them into a sort of beings, holding no more than a middle rank between rational intelligences and the creatures merely animal. But can we ever believe that "the inspiration of the Almighty" has given us understanding only to be debased and insulted? Or is it to be imagined that God, who by his own immediate agency continues to endow the race of mankind with rational faculties, should send into the world so illustrious a person as him, who is the "brightness" of his own "glory" and the most resplendent "image" of his perfections, with the inconsistent design of suspending the exercise of

of these very faculties, or making the use of them superfluous? If we are not to use our reason, why are we put to the unnecessary trouble of suppressing and controuling it's dictates? Why were we not at once made blind, that so we might have been spared the unnatural pains of putting out our own eyes? I know it indeed to be commonly objected, that the giving this free and unrestrained allowance to the exercise and determinations of reason, has a tendency to obstruct and injure the interest of christianity. But surely the meaning of such an objection as this ought well to be considered. And what is the amount of it; but plainly this, that if free inquiry, the encouraging and countenancing human reason; and the suffering ourselves to be determined by its dictates, can be prejudicial to the interest of christianity, it follows, that christianity must be an unreasonable religion; the very point, that all its opposers are endeavouring to prove concerning it?

This however is certain, that our deceased friend, at the same time that he so strongly inculcated the right of private judgment upon others, and so freely used and exercised it himself, was a sincere and zealous advocate for christianity. In his discourses from the pulpit he took all opportunities of justifying the authority, and of pointing out the rational evidences of our holy religion. And
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one of the first pieces that ever he published to the world, was a Sermon in proof and vindication of the *resurrection of Christ*, against the most important objections both of the ancient Jews and modern rejecters of the Gospel. His *Defence likewise of the Usefulness, Truth and Excellency of the Christian Revelation* has, I believe, been well accepted and greatly esteemed by the candid and judicious of all parties. And indeed all who interest themselves in the honor of christianity must, in my opinion, be highly obliged to him, for the moderation and good temper, with which he has handled that argument, in opposition to the noted attempt of a late unbelieving writer. In the management of which he likewise discovered a true and well regulated judgment. For by not undertaking to prove unnecessary points, he more effectually established what was fundamental in the dispute.

And as one great and principal design of the christian religion was to encourage and promote just and honorable sentiments concerning the supreme, eternal Deity, and to exhibit a fair and lovely portrait of his perfections, it is well known how much this zealous asserter of primitive christianity made it his care and study to guard against those mistakes and errors so prevalent amongst christians, by which the father of the universe is unjustly represented either as a partial,

tial, or as an inexorable being. But the placability or propitious mercy of God, as being an essential perfection of the divine nature, deducible from the principles and dictates of reason, and as the natural ground of pardon to all sincere and humble penitents, he was particularly solicitous to establish, as this attribute of the Deity has been in a particular manner reproached and blasphemed by some of the most favorite sentiments of numbers in the christian world. And what he has wrote upon this subject in his *Discourses* lately published (see Vol. I. p. 194 — 217) most deservedly calls for the attention of all, who are desirous of maintaining the honor of the divine perfections and government. And these, it ought to be remembered, whatever particular institution of religion we adhere to, must still remain to be the subjects of the highest importance to the comfort, peace and everlasting happiness of mankind. And very certain it must be, that it is only by entertaining enlarged and honorable sentiments concerning the divine perfections, that we can lay a foundation for that spirit of exalted piety, which, when ever it prevails in our hearts, cannot but have the most happy influence upon the temper, and tend at once to sweeten and to ennoble it. But otherwise what we may call our devotions, may have the most fatal effects towards weakening

ing and impairing those foundations of virtue, and of great, sublime and elevated views, which have been originally laid in our minds by the supreme, universal father of spirits.

And by these reflections we are naturally led to consider another excellence of the highest importance, that in all his public services was visible and conspicuous. What I mean, is, that the main scope and tenor of his preaching was practical and moral. He considered mankind, not as being merely rational, but as formed for social connections and for cultivating and cherishing social dispositions. And in the general strain of his discourses, he wisely declined both the laboured trifles of jejune and insipid criticism, and the entangling intricacies of dry disputation; and applied himself immediately to the real concerns and interests of human nature. He inculcated and recommended those virtues which adorn and regulate human life, and which are absolutely necessary to the security and advancement of social and public happiness. And he was more particularly intent upon enforcing that spirit of universal benevolence, which, according to the express sentiment of St. Paul in the thirteenth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, and of St. James in the second of his general epistle, must be supposed to include in its own proper nature and just extent every social and moral obligation. He knew, that, as the habitual

temper of virtue must be to every one the necessary foundation of his own present happiness, as well as the basis of social peace and order, so it is the only indispensable qualification for participating in the eternal joys of the heavenly and angelic state, and that which thro' the abundant mercy of God will be the sure and certain ground of our being intitled to them. He therefore concluded, that, so far as he should be successful in his endeavors to diffuse and invigorate such a temper amongst mankind, he could not fail of being the promoter of their chief and highest good. He was well satisfied, that according to the original principles of natural reason, nothing could possibly be of greater importance to the happiness of the human race, and to our becoming the objects of the divine favor, than the habit of pure and uncorrupted virtue. And he thought that what was of the highest consideration or moment, in these respects, before any new, external, or special institution of religion took place, must necessarily be so after its establishment. For God is the same and man the same. And therefore such an institution could not possibly be intended to extinguish the light of reason or to falsifie its discoveries, not to abrogate the laws of morality, neither in the least degree to lessen their importance ; but the very end and design of it, and of all its peculiar sanctions and principles, must be to excite mens attention to

to this light of reason, to enforce and to render still more binding these eternal and immutable laws of righteousness and moral goodness. And, finally, he could not but discern, that in the christian religion itself, and those pure and primitive records of it, that are contained in the new testament, the great and ultimate stress is uniformly and invariably laid upon purity and integrity of heart, and upon the prevalence of good and virtuous dispositions in the soul. That what I have been saying contains a just and impartial view of his fixed and most deliberate sentiments upon this head, will appear absolutely undeniable, by attending only to those judicious remarks, with which he concludes that part of his *Discourses* so lately published on the principal branches of natural religion and social virtue, which treats on the being and perfections of God and a future state. See Vol. I. p. 266-9. And, as his general strain of preaching was regulated by these principles, it was on that account singularly and eminently useful. For nothing has been a greater reproach to the profession of the christian religion, nothing has had such a fatal tendency to obstruct its genuine and efficacious influences upon the minds of those, who embrace it, as the notion, that it must needs have been intended to furnish us with something of greater importance to our happiness, and towards our securing the favor of

the supreme creator, than that moral righteousness, purity and goodness, which is the exactest image of his own highest perfections, and which must therefore of necessity be our highest honor, and our best qualification for his mercy and love.

From what has been already laid before you concerning the just and rational sentiments he entertained upon the subject of religion, and of its great and ultimate end, it may easily be presumed, that his discourses must have been intirely free from the angry and enflaming spirit of bigotry and party-zeal. And, I believe, all, who have been accustomed to attend upon them with any degree of seriousness or recollected thought, will be ready to bear me witness, that they had a natural tendency to compose the minds of his hearers into a mild and gentle frame; and instead of exciting any enraged or tumultuous, any haughty or insolent passions, to mitigate and suspend their influence. And indeed the candor and moderation of his temper with relation to the religious differences subsisting among christians, was from his first appearance in the office and character of a minister remarkable and exemplary. And from his Essay on Fundamentals, which he wrote when he was about the age of four and twenty, it appears, that he knew how to make all just and equitable allowances for the prejudices of education, and for the erroneous opinions

opinions of others, without thinking himself under any necessity or obligation to countenance and support them. There likewise he discovers how desirous he was of promoting among christians, notwithstanding all their diversity of opinion, that mutual love or unity of affection, which is the only comprehension, in the case, that can be judged worthy either of a wise man's thought, or a good man's care. For, that all should be comprehended in the same belief, is impracticable : and to profess a common faith, whilst our opinions continue to be really different, must needs, on one side or another, be base and hypocritical. Nor can I forbear citing upon this occasion, the very excellent words, with which he concludes that Essay.

“ I always had, says he, I bless God, ever
 “ since I began to understand or think to
 “ any purpose, large and generous principles,
 “ and there was never any thing, either in
 “ my temper or education, which might
 “ incline me to narrowness and bigotry.
 “ And I am heartily glad of the opportunity,
 “ which now offers itself, of making this
 “ public, serious profession, that I value
 “ those, who are of different persuasions
 “ from me, more than those who agree with
 “ me in sentiment, if they are more serious,
 “ sober and charitable.” And in these catholic sentiments he continued to the last. I have the rather chose to mention these things

things thus particularly, because many of those, who have agreed with him in rejecting the baptism of infants, and adhering to that of the adult, have been unhappily disposed to contract the boundaries of their communion, on account of that difference; and have thus inconsiderately changed the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, which was designed as an emblem and means of universal charity, into a symbol and instrument of division. But we all know, that nothing of this kind can justly be imputed to him.

Thus was he highly qualified for public usefulness by the rational and candid sentiments, which he had so thoroughly and deeply imbibed. But these qualifications were prodigiously enlarged and heightened by those natural powers of eloquence, for which he was early noticed and distinguished. The Essay just now mentioned, tho' not equal, as may easily be imagined, to most of his later performances, does yet discover a sound and clear judgment, and is wrote with the same vivacity of thought, that appears in his later productions. His style is manly, polished, flowing and perspicuous. He paid an habitual attention to the strength and purity of our language: and by his works has contributed not a little towards preserving its force and dignity, amidst that crowd of loose and venal writers, who are every day enfeebling and debasing it. His
address

address was lively and penetrating ; forcible, but yet soft and tender ; raised and elevated, but neither boisterous nor assuming.

These happy and engaging talents, applied, as they were, rendered him highly useful and instrumental towards supporting the cause of rational and primitive christianity, and towards promoting a just and liberal taste in matters of religion. And the loss of his services, is, I think, to be greatly lamented, at a time, when there seems to be such a general, or at least a growing disposition to make a compliment of truth, and reason and liberty, to the mode and fashion of the age, or to the humors and interests of particular parties. But this leads me to the

Second thing proposed, which was to consider the remaining duty incumbent upon those, who have " for a season rejoiced in his light." We find that our blessed Savior does, in the words of the text, make it a ground of censure and reproof in the case of the scribes, rulers, and chief men among the Jews, who had rejoiced in the light of John the Baptist, that they did it only " for a season ; " that is, that after having for some time expressed their pleasure and satisfaction in him, as an excellent preacher of truth and righteousness, they deserted and abandoned the principles, which he had taken so much pains to inculcate, and

and forsook the cause, which he with so much zeal and earnestness had been endeavouring to promote. And we cannot but apprehend the censure to have been strictly pertinent and just. For, tho' they could not but believe, that those rules of probity, equity, goodness and mercy, which he had recommended, were of everlasting obligation and importance, yet, after having made some superficial pretences to a reformation of manners, and a just regulation of their lives, they continued to be altogether as corrupt and degenerate as before. And, tho' they acknowledged him to be a prophet, they inconsistently, and in direct contrariety to such an acknowledgment, rejected his testimony concerning the approaching kingdom of the Messiah, and the person, by whom it was to be erected and established. And thus they plainly shewed, that either they were not before sincere in professing to look upon John as a prophet, but did it only for the sake of the popularity of such a profession, as John was in high esteem among the people, and by all in general supposed to bear the prophetic character; or else that they were now acting under the influence of the most dishonorable prejudices, and chose rather to contradict their own judgment concerning him, than to submit to the reforming scheme and purifying doctrines of the gospel.

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And give me leave, upon this serious and affecting occasion, to remind those, who have "for a season" professed themselves the admirers of Dr. Foster's excellent instructions, that, notwithstanding the agreeable and engaging manner in which they were conveyed, yet the principles, of which they consisted, did not receive their importance from his recommendation of them; but that he recommended them, because he knew them to be in their own essential nature of the utmost moment. Should these principles therefore be now on your part forsaken and deserted, there will be too much reason to suspect, that your rejoicing in him, instead of being founded upon what was most valuable and excellent in his ministrations, was wholly owing to some transient starts of humor, or was at best dependent upon those engaging forms of address, which he himself would have allowed to have been comparatively trifling considerations. Nor can we possibly be guilty of a greater disrespect to his memory, than to suppose, as by such conduct we shall seem to suppose, that he spent his time and pains in inculcating principles, which, tho' true, were yet but of momentary and occasional importance. Or, if we allow them to be really and permanently interesting, let us remember, that truths like these are not only

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to be owned, but to be loved, respected and honored. Nor is it to be thought, that the cause of " pure and undefiled religion " can ever be supported by the mere amusements of the understanding, or by indolent concessions, that this is right, and that is wrong, but by promoting to the utmost of our power what we believe to be right, and by opposing that which we apprehend to be wrong, in the spirit of meekness and charity, but yet of courage and resolution. In vain do we lament the growth of infidelity, whilst by our feeble attachments to what we ourselves believe to be the truth, we are countenancing those corruptions in the profession of the christian religion, which have ever furnished the chief occasion for objecting against its authority. On the other hand, what might not be done towards rescuing our most excellent and divine religion, both from the attacks of infidelity, and the corruptions of superstition and bigotry, mutually aiding and supporting each other, did but all those, who are in judgment and opinion the friends of reason, liberty and primitive christianity, unite their influence, and act in thorough consistency with their principles? But if, after all, amidst the slavish, sordid pursuit of riches, the perpetual round of amusement, vanity and pleasure, the grand interests of society are

are in a manner forgot ; and we daily sink into a deeper insensibility as to all that is generous, great and noble in the life of man, “ it had been better for us not to have known the ways of righteousness, than, after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto us.” And this naturally suggests what ought to be particularly and most especially attended to ; I mean, that our zeal and earnest contention for the truth can never be of the genuine or acceptable kind, unless we feel it's correcting and refining influences upon our hearts. Every just idea, that we can possibly form of the nature and perfections of God, upon whose acceptance and final approbation our eternal happiness depends, must necessarily convince us, that it is there our knowledge must terminate, in order to its being of any solid or lasting advantage to us. And it is the express declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ, that without charity, the temper and habit of sincere virtue and goodness, even tho' we have all “ knowledge, and understand all mysteries, it will profit us nothing.” And it ought to be matter of very serious and deliberate reflection with all those, who profess to have any reverence or regard for rational principles of religion, that one of the greatest encouragements to their being so slightly spoken

of by some, and so strongly objected to by others, is, that they who profess to believe them, seem so little to be governed by them. Were but the due application of them made to the state and temper of the mind, did we but allow them to have their just and natural influence over the passions and affections of the soul, how powerful and efficacious, how lovely and engaging would they appear! The writings of that justly admired preacher, to whose memory we have now been paying, what I esteemed the fair and equitable debt of respect and honor, will bear him a lasting testimony, (and to them I appeal) how particularly careful he was to guard against those licentious principles, which, under the name and pretence of liberty, tend to undermine the very foundations of religion, and how studious to inculcate the strictest laws of sobriety, righteousness and integrity.

And now, as the conclusion and proper improvement of the whole, I would observe, that the occasion of this discourse, together with the several reflections, that in it we have been pursuing, immediately directs our thoughts to that grand distinction, which, when once it is deeply impressed upon our hearts, cannot fail of being attended with the most interesting consequences. That di-

distinction I mean between those pleasures and satisfactions, that are of an uncertain, transient, and momentary nature, and those that are fixed, permanent, and abiding. Under the former class all agree to rank the pleasures of sense and appetite. The voluptuary himself allows the sentiment, and assigns it as the very reason for the keenness of his pursuit. Infatuated by the dreams of his gay, licentious fancy, he prefers these fleeting, visionary joys to the substantial pleasures of sobriety and reason. Taking it for granted, in direct contradiction to all the distinguishing and peculiar honors of his nature, that these are his best and truest pleasures, he knows no other use of considering their uncertain and short duration, than to make the more eager haste after the fullest enjoyment of them. Others indeed there are, who seem to think, that they are acting a much wiser part in renouncing these irregular pleasures of mere sense and appetite, and addicting themselves to the pursuit of what they esteem a more solid and substantial good, the riches or the honors of human life. But let these be viewed in their proper light, as equally liable to be snatched from us, and for ever lost by the stroke of death; and, if we have any thoughts or sentiments, any desires or hopes beyond the grave, we cannot but immediately discern the amazing folly of making

making these our chief and sovereign good; And scarce is it possible to conceive of a more melancholy and distressing scene, than that, which must necessarily pass in the mind of a rational and immortal creature, made capable of enjoying the substantial and durable pleasures of virtue, when he is just quitting the world, and has then first discovered, what he might before have assuredly known, that all the joys of this life, unaccompanied with the sentiments and temper of true religion, are vanity and vexation of spirit. With what reluctance and aversion, with what dreadful horrors of mind must he then see himself under the instant necessity of being for ever separated from all those pleasures, from all those pursuits, for which only, thro' the corruption and degeneracy of his heart, he has any taste or relish; and making his awful entrance upon another world with a mind altogether alienated from the only pleasures, that are there to be enjoyed! And this must be the wretched and forlorn condition, not only of the luxurious rioter, and open violator of public order, but of every one, in whom the love of God, of virtue and of true goodness, is not the predominant and ruling affection, by whatever grave and formal, whatever plausible and specious appearances his contrary temper may be disguised. Amongst men indeed there

there is the utmost partiality in this respect. And of vices equally odious in their own nature, equally destructive of public peace and happiness, some expose to immediate shame and infamy, others procure reverence and honor. But "God is no respecter of persons." And wherever there is an equal defect of virtue, there must be an equal incapacity for his favor, whatever may be the particular passion that has usurped its place and influence in the soul. Conscious therefore of the eminent privileges and superior dignity of our nature, let us dread the thought of sinking and debasing it. Conscious of our high and glorious hope of immortality, let us cherish no dispositions, indulge to no habits, that are inconsistent with it, that would tend to divert our attention from it, or render us less capable of being entertained, pleased and delighted with it. Whatever pleasure may invite our regards, or tempt our pursuit, let each of us ask himself; is it one that death can deprive me of? is it one, that I can vindicate and justify before God? will it bear the test and trial of another world? will it fit me for the joys of the heavenly state? And when we consider, that time at best is short, that the period of it with respect to ourselves is infinitely precarious and uncertain, that the "fashion of this world"

is

is continually "passing away", that death is every day displaying his triumphs, and reminding each man by the removal of some or other of his acquaintance, relations or friends, of the important summons, which he himself must ere long obey, the least degree of serious reflection will not suffer us to doubt, whether these things are to be made our present and immediate concern, or whether we may safely defer the thought of them to some distant moment.



The E N D.